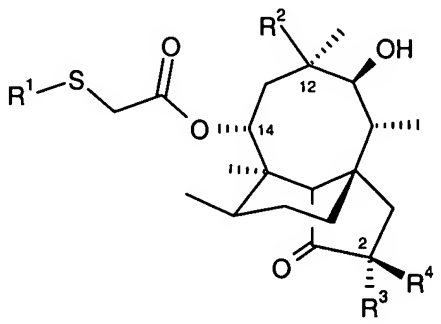
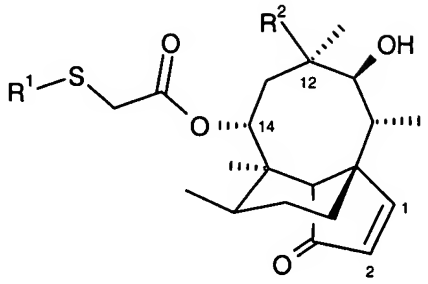
Amendments to the Claims:

We claim:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of formula (IA) or (IB):



(IA)



(IB)

~~in which~~ wherein:

R^1 is phenyl or a five- or six-membered ~~aryl or~~ heteroaryl ring, wherein R^1 is substituted by a carboxylic acid group that is attached at a position which is not adjacent to the point of attachment of the sulphur, and wherein R^1 is optionally further substituted by up to four groups independently selected from halogen, (C_{1-6})alkyl, aryl, aryl(C_{1-6})alkyl, (C_{1-6})alkoxy, (C_{1-6})alkoxy(C_{1-6})alkyl, halo(C_{1-6})alkyl, aryl(C_{1-6})alkoxy, hydroxy, nitro, cyano, azido, amino, mono- and di-N-(C_{1-6})alkylamino, acylamino, arylcarbonylamino, acyloxy, carbamoyl, mono- and di-N-(C_{1-6})alkylcarbamoyl, (C_{1-6})alkoxycarbonyl, aryloxycarbonyl, ureido, guanidino, (C_{1-6})alkylguanidino, amidino, (C_{1-6})alkylamidino, sulphonylamino, aminosulphonyl, (C_{1-6})alkylthio, (C_{1-6})alkylsulphinyl, (C_{1-6})alkylsulphonyl, heterocyclyl, heteroaryl, heterocyclyl(C_{1-6})alkyl and heteroaryl(C_{1-6})alkyl, or two adjacent ring carbon atoms may be linked by a (C_{3-5})alkylene chain, to form a carbocyclic ring;

R^2 is vinyl or ethyl; and

R^3 is hydrogen, hydroxy or fluorine and R^4 is hydrogen,

or R^3 is hydrogen and R^4 is fluorine;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof~~;~~

~~with the proviso that the compound of formula (IA) is not (2-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester~~.

2. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is a five- or six-membered aryl ring or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring containing up to three heteroatoms independently selected from nitrogen, sulphur or oxygen, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

3. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein R^1 is a six-membered aryl ring or a six-membered heteroaryl ring containing one or two nitrogen atoms, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

4. (Currently Amended) A compound according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein R^1 is phenyl or pyridyl, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

5. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 selected from:
(4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
(4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid 19,20-dihydro-mutilin 14-ester;
(3-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester; and
(5-carboxylato-pyridin-2-yl-sulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof.

6. (Currently Amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, diluent or carrier.

7. (Currently Amended) A compound as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, for use in therapy.

8. (Cancelled)

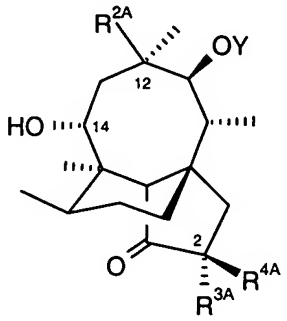
9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method of treating microbial infections in animals, ~~especially in humans and in domesticated mammals,~~ which comprises administering a compound according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.

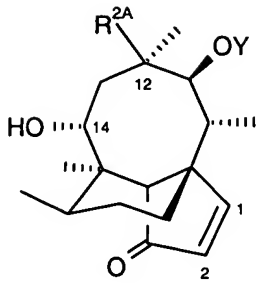
11. (Currently Amended) A method of treatment of skin and soft tissue infections in humans, which comprises topically administering a compound according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.

12. (Original) A process for preparing a compound of formula (IA) or (IB) as claimed in claim 1 which process comprises:

(a) reacting a compound of formula (IIA) or (IIB):



(IIA)



(IIB)

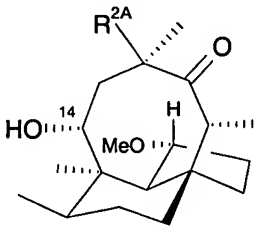
in which Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R^2, R^3 and R^4 as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible R^2, R^3 and R^4, with an active derivative of a carboxylic acid of formula (III):

$$R^{1A}SCH_2CO_2H$$

(III)

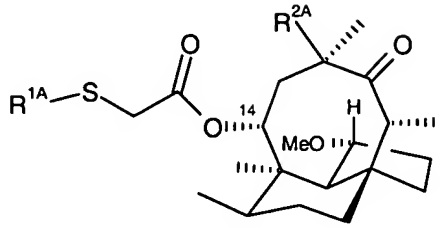
where R^{1A} is R^1 as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R^1, under ester forming conditions and, where required or desired,
converting Y to hydrogen,
converting an R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} group to a R^2, R^3 and R^4 group, and/or
converting one R^2, R^3 and R^4 group to another R^2, R^3 and R^4 group;

(b) for a compound of formula (IA) in which R^3 and R^4 are both hydrogen, reacting an epi-mutilin compound of formula (IIC):



(IIC)

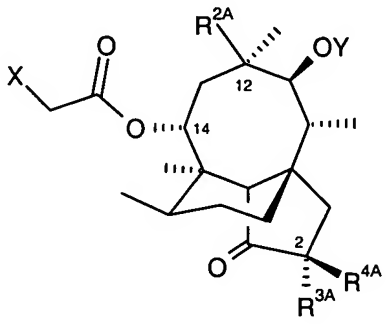
in which R^{2A} is R^2 as defined in claim 1, or a group convertible to R^2;
with a compound of formula (III) as hereinbefore defined;
to give a compound of formula (IV):



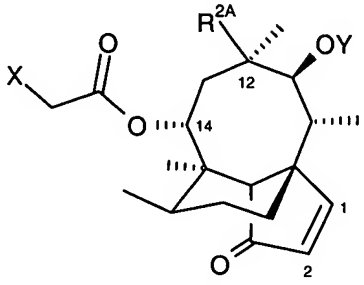
(IV)

then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired, converting an R^{1A} group to an R^1 group and an R^{2A} group to an R^2 group;

(c) reacting a compound of formula VA or VB



VA



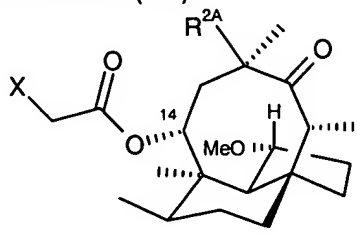
VB

wherein X is a leaving group, Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R^2, R^3 and R^4 as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible to R^2, R^3 and R^4,
with a compound of formula (VI):

$$R^{1A}SH$$
(VI)

where R^{1A} is R^1 as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R^1 and, where required or desired,
converting Y to hydrogen,
converting an R^{1A}, R^{2A}, R^{3A} or R^{4A} group to an R^1, R^2, R^3 or R^4 group, and/or
converting one R^1, R^2, R^3 or R^4 group to another R^1, R^2, R^3 or R^4 group;or

(d) reacting a compound of formula (VC):



(VC)

where X and R^{2A} are as defined for formulae VA and VB,
with the compound (VI),
then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired,
converting an R^{1A} or R^{2A} group to a R^1 or R^2 group, and/or
converting one R^1 or R^2 group to another R^1 or R^2 group.